

Inspection of a good school: Avenue Centre for Education

Cutenhoe Road, Luton, Bedfordshire LU1 3NJ

Inspection dates:

12 and 13 October 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils speak warmly of their positive relationships with staff. Adults build pupils' trust and engagement with learning. This is key to the school's success. The small classes help pupils regain confidence in their ability to do well.

The school environment is calm and purposeful. Adults model the behaviours they expect of pupils. There are clear boundaries and routines. Pupils consider that this is important. Pupils are safe and well cared for. Bullying is rare. However, pupils would willingly discuss any concerns with adults if needed. They are confident that adults would help to resolve any problem.

Every morning, leaders and staff greet pupils as they arrive. This helps to quickly detect if pupils are feeling unsettled. Support is provided, if needed, so that pupils are ready to learn. Staff expect pupils to aim high and to try their best at all times. However, not all staff have the expertise to effectively and consistently meet pupils' learning needs, including in the teaching of reading.

Parents appreciate the difference the school has made for their children. They welcome communications that keep them informed about their child's progress. Many comment on the positive steps taken to reignite pupils' interests, academically and personally.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Many pupils arrive at the Avenue Centre having spent time out of education. Leaders make a careful analysis of pupils' individual needs and difficulties. A bespoke programme provides each pupil with opportunities to re-engage with learning. Most of the curriculum is well planned. It builds pupils' understanding so that it helps them to remember what

they have learned. In a few subjects, the curriculum is being refined. This is to ensure that plans include the small steps pupils need to build their knowledge.

Alternative providers complement the vocational training opportunities for pupils. Occasionally, they provide some academic education. Leaders ensure the consistent use of assessment approaches at other alternative providers. This helps to track pupils' progress when they are not attending the school site.

Typically, staff have good knowledge of the subjects they teach. They provide pupils with clear explanations. Regular questioning helps staff to identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge. Many staff are skilful in building pupils' confidence. This encourages pupils to attempt increasingly difficult tasks successfully. Leaders have recognised that more training is needed for staff in providing both academic and behavioural support. Not all staff have the expertise to meet the needs of all pupils effectively.

Approaches for the teaching of reading are in the early stages of implementation. Some pupils arrive who are at the early stages of reading. Staff do not have a consistent understanding of how pupils learn to read. Some do not know how to build pupils' phonic knowledge to help them to read accurately. Pupils are not encouraged to read a range of books. This means that they do not develop a love of reading for pleasure.

Staff are alert to the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They understand how to manage pupils and their behaviour. More pupils are arriving with a range of different needs. Leaders have identified further staff training to meet the needs of pupils with more complex needs.

Pupils behave well in lessons. They listen carefully to their teachers. Pupils complete their work, ensuring that it is neat and tidy. This demonstrates their pride and improving attitudes to learning.

Pupils learn key skills that will support them for a life out of education. Adults model the conventions of communication that pupils will need to use in the workplace. Pupils know about the importance of respecting differences. Real-life experiences teach pupils about needs within local communities, such as supporting food bank services. Pupils also receive effective guidance and advice about careers.

Leaders and governors have a clear vision for what they want pupils to achieve. They collate a range of information about the work they do. However, they do not have a sharp enough focus on the impact of their work, especially regarding how all pupils' needs are being met. Governors are not precise about holding leaders to account.

Staff welcome the support they receive from leaders. They appreciate the way that leaders and governors are mindful of staff's workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding has the highest priority. Staff with responsibilities for safeguarding have a good knowledge of the local issues that affect pupils. They work alongside external partners to help tackle serious issues, such as gang activity and crime. They provide pupils with advice and support to help them understand how they can keep themselves safe. Leaders ensure that there is regular training and communication with staff to help them remain vigilant for any signs of concern. Staff report every concern, no matter how small.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The approach for the teaching of reading is not sufficiently rigorous or well sequenced. This is because staff are not trained well enough to ensure that pupils gain the phonics and language knowledge they need to read well. Leaders need to ensure that there is a cohesive approach to teaching all pupils to read with accuracy and fluency.
- Leaders and governors do not make effective use of the wealth of information they collate. This means that they lack clarity about the impact of their curriculum in meeting the needs of pupils. Leaders should ensure that there is greater coordination of the information they hold to meet the needs of pupils and improve the quality of education.
- Some staff have not received the training they need to meet both the academic and behavioural needs of pupils. Leaders should continue to implement their plans to improve staff's knowledge and skills, to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the curriculum that they provide for their pupils.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in July 2017.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	134525
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	10242210
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	86 (and 28 dual registered with their home schools)
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lawrence Patterson
Headteacher	Jeremy Dodd
Website	www.avenuecentre.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	4 and 5 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up post in September 2022.
- The school provides for pupils who have been permanently excluded or are at risk of permanent exclusion. A small number have an education, health and care plan.
- The school makes use of 14 alternative providers. Pupils attend these for specific sessions and periods of time. The providers include organisations that offer academic education, vocational training and therapeutic support. Pupils who attend alternative providers are registered on the school's roll.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with a range of senior staff during the inspection, including the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team and the special educational needs coordinator.

- Inspectors spoke to the members of the management committee, including the chair, and held a telephone conversation with the school's improvement partner.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, and personal, social, health and economic education. They met with a range of staff and pupils. Inspectors made visits to lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils about their work and their experiences at school. Inspectors also considered pupils' learning in other subjects.
- Inspectors took account of responses to Ofsted's staff survey and to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.
- The lead inspector talked to a small number of parents on the telephone and considered responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation and curriculum documents. Inspectors evaluated information related to pupils' behaviour and their wider development.
- To consider the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors met with leaders, talked to staff and pupils and reviewed a range of school documents and records.

Inspection team

Steve Mellors, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Linda Bartlett

Ofsted Inspector

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